

Operation Iraq Freedom: Thoughts from a deployed Physical Therapist

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Happy Holidays to all. May we continue to pray for peace in the New Year.

First, I want to thank the many people of the SP Corps and Physical Therapy Branch for the overwhelming support. The letters, packages, emails and prayers are so appreciated.

I am currently serving with the 21st CSH, A Co in Balad Iraq, approximately 50 miles NW of Baghdad. When Christmas day arrives, we will have been in theater just over 9 months. During the course of that time, I have had the pleasure of working and corresponding with a number of fellow SPs also in theater. To include PAs, CPT Maria Marlow, CPT Doug Dusenberry, CPT Joel Bachman to name a few; Dietitians, MAJ Colleen Kesselring, 1LT Tamrin Massey; OTs, MAJ Beth Salisbury, CPT Rob Montz, CPT Karen Norton, CPT Florie Gonzales, CPT Jay Clasing, 1LT Sherielee Camacho; PTs, MAJ Macrina Alaya, MAJ Danny Jayne, CPT Derek George, CPT Kirk McBride, CPT Steve Seward, LT Kevin Harris, LT Scott Kushner, LT Eric Grenier and USAF 1LT Brian Langford.

Because we are without orthopedic technicians and PT technicians here at A Co, I am always looking for assistance. CPT Dusenberry and CPT Bachman thought they were just passing through the CSH, but I snagged them and they were kind enough to assist me. CPT Bachman assisted with a splint in the EMT and CPT Dusenberry gave a steroid injection for a soldier with shoulder impingement syndrome not responding to conservative treatment. Unbeknownst to them, their timing was perfect.

CPT Montz performed sick call here with us for the few weeks he was here in Balad and provided us with further training in splinting and wound care. CPT Norton also spent a few days here. During her stay she assisted us with performing wound care on a couple of soldiers with burns to their hands and legs resulting from mishaps with the infamous burn out latrines. CPT Clasing stopped by during the UN Bombing MASCAL and quickly stepped in to assist us with treating the victims. CPT Gonzales was at the CSH less than an hour and I had consulted him on a young Iraqi girl, Aya, who had been badly burned. He helped to educate the nursing staff on wound care and positioning. In addition he continues to offer his expertise through electronic consultation. MAJ Salisbury and LT Camacho fabricated a wash mitt, lapboard and an ADL cuff for a young Iraqi boy who was shot. Iraqis commonly fire their weapons in celebration. Young Mustafa was hit during a wedding celebration and as a result is a C5 quadriplegic.

I am also fortunate in that I have a N3 working with me. SGT Erick Cedenio was initially attached to the 10th CSH out of FT Carson. He volunteered to cross-level to the 21st CSH. His skills as an OT technician have been invaluable and his willingness to cross

train as PT tech has made my job so much easier as well as improving the access to and quality of care for our soldiers.

The PTs of course have provided me with incredible moral support in theater and from CONUS. I had the pleasure of working with CPT McBride during the early days of the war. We assisted with sick call on Camp Victory, Kuwait while we patiently awaited orders to move north. CPT George and LT Langford provided us with much needed supplies early on in the deployment. I continue to correspond with fellow PTs in theater, sharing experiences, discussing issues and exchanging ideas.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the incredible work SSG Wendy Hansen, N9 did for B Co, 21st CSH in Mosul, Iraq. She provided excellent care for the soldiers of the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) and was instrumental in running the Specialty-Outpatient Clinic in addition to getting much needed orthopedic supplies for both A and B Co. She recently PCS'd to Germany leaving a huge void up North.

Also, N9, SGT Michael Winter, 546th ASMC, volunteered for over a month to assist us with afternoon clinic. Our numbers almost doubled with his assistance. His willingness and eagerness to assist us was inspiring and is a true testament to the truly caring professionals we have within our Corps.

It is this kind of teamwork that allows us to do what we are doing out here. It is the support and friendship from fellow SP soldiers that have made this deployment a positive and memorable experience.



MAJ Adams-Challenger, PT, assists with a UN bombing patient



MAJ Kesselring (RD), MAJ Adams-Challenger (PT), and SGT Erik Cedenon (N3) with Mustafa, a C5 quad patient



MAJ Adams-Challenger (PT) and CPT Florie (OT) Gonzales with 6 year old burn victim